REPRESENTATIVE FOR
CHILDREN AND YOUTH

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Office of the
Representative for Children and Youth

Service Plan
2011/12 to 2013/14

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REPRESENTATIVE FOR
CHILDREN AND YOUTH

November 2, 2010

The Honourable Bill Barisoff
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Suite 207, Parliament Buildings
Victoria, B.C. V8V 1X4

Dear Mr. Speaker:

It is my pleasure to present the 2011/12 to 2013/14 Service Plan of the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth to the Legislative Assembly.

This report covers the period April 1, 2011 to March 31, 2014 and has been prepared in accordance with part 5, section 17 of the *Representative for Children and Youth Act*.

Yours sincerely,

Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond
Representative for Children and Youth
Province of British Columbia

pc: Mr. E. George MacMinn, QC
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

Ms. Joan McIntyre, MLA
Chair, Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth

Message from the Representative for Children and Youth

All children deserve the support of their parents, family, community and society to ensure that they grow in a nurturing environment focused on their healthy development and well-being. However, some children are more vulnerable than others, and they require special supports and services from government. Some of the most vulnerable of these children are in the care of government or a relative, or they live in some other guardianship arrangement. This could be because their parents are unwilling, unable or incapable of caring for them. These children are served by a broad, complex and multi-layered system of child- and youth-serving programs provided by the Ministry of Children and Family Development and other government ministries, as well as and indirectly through a network of non-government agencies and contract service organizations.

One of the roles of my Office is to provide oversight to the child- and youth-serving system, to help ensure public accountability and efficiency in delivery. My Office has a mandated role to:

- provide advocacy support to children, youth and their families as they navigate their way through the various systems
- monitor the overall system to help ensure the delivery of quality services and supports to children, and
- undertake reviews and investigations of critical injuries and deaths of children receiving reviewable government services.

This service plan is based on the foundations of last year's plan and builds on the broad themes that I set to guide the work of my Office:

- fairness and equal opportunity for all children and youth across the province
- enhanced attention and effort by the province to meet the highest standard of duty of care for children and youth under its guardianship, and
- greater attention by government to integrate, coordinate and improve services to prevent critical injury or deaths of children and youth and to reduce their exposure to violence.

My Office will continue to build on and enhance its Advocacy program. Every child and youth has the right to be healthy, safe and educated and to have their views heard and considered. To increase awareness of children's rights generally, and the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* specifically, my Office is partnering with the Society for Children and Youth of BC and the Institute for

Safe Schools and Communities of BC to develop and implement the Child Rights Public Awareness Campaign.

In the coming years, the advocacy services of my Office may be required to extend to children and youth involved in the family justice system to ensure that they have access to advocacy in relation to such matters as guardianship and custody. I also plan to enhance and expand my Office's advocacy outreach program to ensure that children and youth in all regions of B.C. have access to advocacy support and advice. Greater attention will also be given to the learning that comes from collecting and analyzing information across individual advocacy cases. This essential information will be used to make recommendations for system-wide improvements to child- and youth-serving programs and services.

The Monitoring, Research and Evaluation program will continue its objective, evidence-based and child-centred reviews and evaluations, to identify and recommend systemic improvements that lead to better outcomes for vulnerable children and youth. Over the past year, my Office has partnered and collaborated with the University of Victoria, the University of British Columbia, the University of Western Ontario, the McCreary Centre Society and the Adoptive Families Association of BC. These partnerships have broadened and strengthened the research capacity of my Office and have produced a broad range of materials, constructive advice and research reports. A secondary benefit is that these initiatives provide an opportunity for post-secondary students to become engaged in the child- and youth-serving field, which strengthens future research capacity.

A key aspect of my Office's mandate is the review of critical injuries and deaths of children and youth who received reviewable services. An important part of this program is conducting aggregate reviews on recurring circumstances or trends, such as the reviews of deaths of children under the age of two and self-harm injuries and suicide deaths, and the proposed reviews on substance abuse and planning for children in care. These reviews provide a window of examination into important issues affecting the overall health and well-being of children in British Columbia, but require a level of rigour in the analysis that is both costly and time-consuming. As well, as noted in previous reports, it has proven to be a challenge to meet my mandate and review and, where necessary, investigate the critical injuries and deaths of children in a comprehensive, effective and timely way within current allocated resources.

In past service plans I have made the point that we need to pay special attention to the circumstances of Aboriginal children and youth. I continue to make that point at this time. The astounding disparity in B.C. between outcomes for Aboriginal children and

non-Aboriginal children and youth continues to exist. Dedicated effort is needed to address the gap in the health and well-being of Aboriginal children and youth. My Office continues to make a focus on Aboriginal children and youth a priority in all program areas.

And finally, I remain extremely concerned about child poverty in B.C. The province continues to have the highest child poverty rate in Canada. Government must act with urgency, and engage all parties in dealing with this issue. Child poverty has a profound impact on a child's development. It also negatively affects British Columbia as a whole, given the significant and long-term costs of poverty to society. Over many decades and in all jurisdictions, poverty has been identified as the most common thread for children and families served by child welfare systems. It is imperative that government develop and implement a comprehensive, coordinated and seamless plan supported by all political parties and community and business leaders that addresses child poverty in B.C.

B.C. must continue to strive to understand the impact that child- and youth-serving programs have in improving outcomes for vulnerable children and youth. In October 2010, at my second Champions for Children and Youth Summit conference, Provincial Health Officer Dr. Perry Kendall and I released *Growing Up in B.C.* This report was jointly produced by our offices. It highlights that the first step in improving circumstances and outcomes for B.C.'s children and youth is to understand how they are doing at the present time. We need to understand what is working – what is going well for children and youth in the province – and what needs to be changed to improve the conditions, circumstances and experiences of children and youth. The report creates a baseline for understanding the current health and well-being of our children and youth. It is hoped that all those involved in the child- and youth-serving system – elected officials, policy makers, researchers, community members and parents and young people themselves – will use this information as a foundation for better understanding how well our children and youth are doing. Additionally, *Growing Up in B.C.* can help identify what we all need to focus on in the future to help vulnerable children and youth achieve better outcomes.

Yours respectfully,

Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond
Representative for Children and Youth

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Overview of the Office

Establishment of the Representative for Children and Youth

The creation of the position of the Representative for Children and Youth was a central recommendation of the April 2006 B.C. Children and Youth Review undertaken by the Honourable Ted Hughes, QC (Hughes Review).

The Hughes Review was commissioned following the death of a child who was placed by an agency with relatives. This placement resulted in questions about the Ministry of Children and Family Development's (MCFD) service delivery and the child-serving system. The review concluded that the ministry and system had been "buffeted by an unmanageable degree of change," including leadership change, practice change, organizational and operational change and budget cuts. The Hughes Review made a number of recommendations for reform to the child- and youth-serving system in the province intended to stabilize the system. One of the most significant recommendations was the creation of the Representative to provide independent oversight and to "push for improvements to the child welfare system" in the province. The Representative would be an Independent Officer of the Legislature who would report not to any government ministry, but report publicly to the Legislative Assembly through a Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth.

November 2005: The Honourable Ted Hughes is appointed to conduct an independent review of British Columbia's child protection system. More than 70 individuals with special expertise and over 300 child welfare groups contribute to the review.

April 7, 2006: The "B.C. Children and Youth Review" is submitted to the provincial government. The review includes 62 recommendations for changes to the child welfare system; the recommendations are publicly endorsed by both the B.C. government and the official Opposition.

May 18, 2006: The Province passes the *Representative for Children and Youth Act*, establishing the Legislative Assembly's authority to appoint the Representative for Children and Youth as an officer of the Legislature.

Nov. 27, 2006: By unanimous vote, the Legislative Assembly appoints Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond for a five-year term as Representative for Children and Youth.

April 1, 2007: After filling an interim role as acting Child and Youth Officer, Ms. Turpel-Lafond assumes her full responsibilities as Representative for Children and Youth.

The establishment of the Office of the Representative was a response to public concerns around accountability and public reporting. An independent oversight body was necessary to ensure that the public knows what the child welfare system is accountable for – what it does and how it does it. The Representative was mandated to advocate for individual children, youth and their families, monitor the child welfare system and advocate for system changes, and review child critical injuries and deaths.

The Representative

Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond, B.C. 's first Representative for Children and Youth, appointed on November 27, 2006, is a judge on leave from the Saskatchewan Provincial Court. Her work as a criminal law judge in youth and adult courts led her to help develop partnerships to better serve the needs of young people in the justice system. She was a tenured professor of law at Dalhousie University Faculty of Law, and taught law at the University of Toronto, the University of Notre Dame and other universities. She holds a doctorate of law from Harvard Law School, a master's degree in international law from Cambridge University and a law degree from Osgoode Hall. She is a mother of four children and a member of the Muskeg Lake Cree Nation in Saskatchewan.

Representative's Mandate

Representative for Children and Youth Act, section 6, Representative's Duties

The representative is responsible for performing the following functions in accordance with this Act:

(a) support, assist, inform and advise children and their families respecting designated services, which activities include, without limitation,

  (i) providing information and advice to children and their families about how to effectively access designated services and how to become effective self advocates with respect to those services,

  (ii) advocating on behalf of a child receiving or eligible to receive a designated service, and

  (iii) supporting, promoting in communities and commenting publicly on advocacy services for children and their families with respect to designated services;

(b) monitor, review, audit and conduct research on the provision of a designated service by a public body or director for the purpose of making recommendations to improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of that service, and comment publicly on any of these functions;

(c) review, investigate and report on the critical injuries and deaths of children as set out in Part 4;

(d) perform any other prescribed functions.

The Representative for Children and Youth's mandate includes:

Advocacy – The Representative has a mandate to assist B.C. children and youth under 19 years of age who are in government care (such as foster homes, group homes or youth custody) or receiving other designated services from the Ministry of Children and Family Development or other ministries and child- and youth-serving organizations. The Representative and her staff provide information, advice and support to children, youth and their families who need help in dealing with designated services. This includes encouraging and supporting vulnerable children and youth to speak up for themselves and to make them aware of the availability of experienced advocates who can assist them and advocate on their behalf.

Advocacy staff work with child- and youth-serving organizations to ensure the views and opinions of children and youth are not only sought, but actually heard and taken into consideration on issues that affect them. On many occasions children and youth cannot speak for themselves. In these situations, Office staff directly advocate for the young person, ensuring that the voice of the child or youth is paramount in decisions being made about them, and helping them "navigate" the complex systems of support.

The Office's advocacy team also promotes and encourages the development of community advocacy organizations through outreach, information, education and support. It engages youth directly to hear about their concerns and obtain their input on how child and youth services can be made more responsive.

Monitoring, Research and Evaluation – To fulfill its oversight role, the Office of the Representative monitors the child- and youth-serving system, conducts research, reviews the effectiveness and responsiveness of services and programs, and reports publicly on its findings.

Trends or themes emerging from monitoring and research activities and advocacy work serve to identify systemic issues related to government-funded child and youth services and programs requiring further review and evaluation. The Representative reports publicly on these more broadly defined – or systemic – issues, including reports making recommendations for improvements to services and programs. The Representative consults with youth, as appropriate and possible, to obtain their views on issues and input into possible solutions. In addition, the Representative monitors very closely the range of issues that emerge from her meetings, correspondence and public engagements. These are all opportunities to "take the temperature" of the systems of support for vulnerable children and youth.

Research projects undertaken by the Representative are designed to contribute to a better understanding of the issues affecting vulnerable children and youth and how outcomes can be improved. Wherever possible and feasible, the Representative collaborates with other public bodies, agencies and post-secondary institutions in conducting research activities. This ensures that the Representative benefits from the knowledge and experience of others and that a broad and integrated perspective is provided.

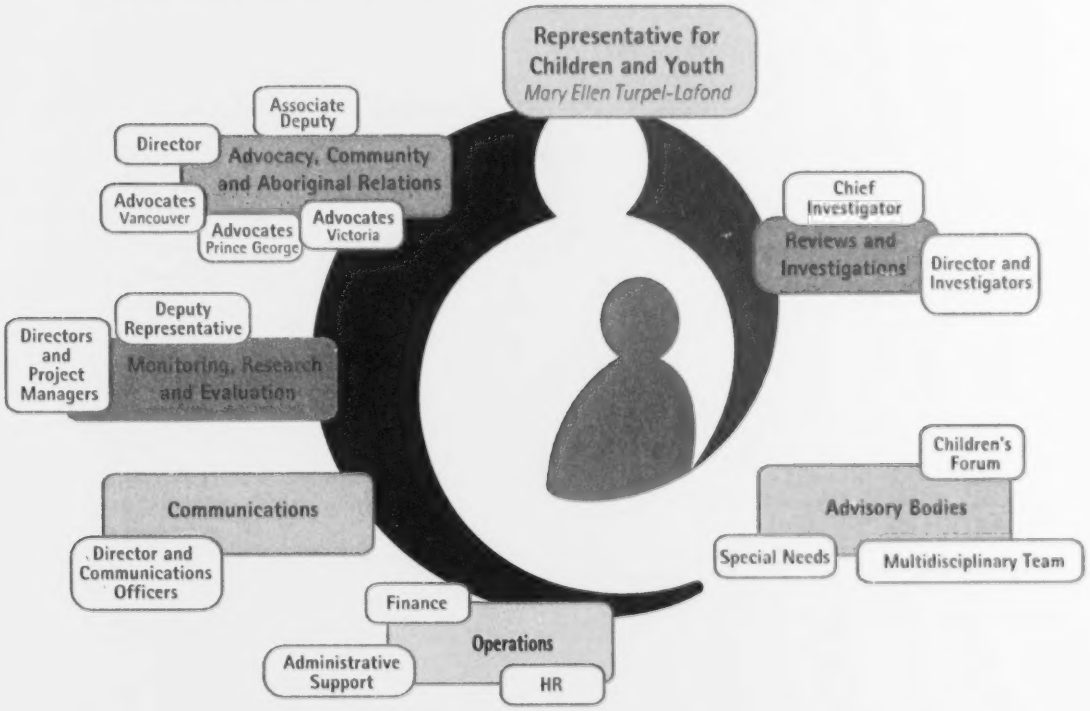
Designated services are government-funded services or programs for children, youth and their families, including but not limited to family support, child protection, foster care, adoption, guardianship, children and youth with disabilities, early childhood development and child care services, mental health and addiction services for children and youth, youth justice, services for youth and young adults during their transition to adulthood.

Reviews and Investigations of Critical Injuries and Deaths – A key aspect of the Representative's mandate is the review and investigation of critical injuries and deaths of children and youth who have received reviewable services in the year prior to the occurrence of a critical injury or death. The objective of this work is to determine whether the system may have contributed in any way to the injury to or death of a child, and to recommend improvements to service, practice or policy aimed at preventing future tragedies.

In addition to the opportunity for learning, the results of the Representative's investigations fulfill a critical public accountability function by providing an independent, external analysis of events, with the child at the forefront throughout. The focus on the perspective of the needs of the child or youth is central to the Representative's approach. Applying this lens informs a different kind of analysis than is typically conducted in an internal review process carried out by the ministry or other agencies.

Reviewable services are services or programs under the *Child, Family and Community Service Act* and the *Youth Justice Act* and include mental health and addiction services for children.

Organizational Structure



Fulfilling the Mandate

To be effective in meeting its mandate, the Office needs the confidence and trust of the public. Public trust and confidence in the Office is created in three ways: 1) by the legislated independence of the Representative and her Office; 2) by a child-centred focus on supporting children and youth; and 3) by the integrity and effectiveness of the Office in carrying out its duties and responsibilities. The Office also needs the trust and confidence of the child-serving system to be effective in working with ministries and agencies to build understanding of required improvements to promote better outcomes for children and youth.

Independence

The independence of the Office is enshrined in the *Representative for Children and Youth Act*, which provides the Representative with the independent oversight authority and the responsibility for advocating for children and youth to ensure their rights are upheld, interests considered and voices heard by child- and youth-serving agencies in issues and decisions affecting them. The Representative does not report through a government ministry. She is accountable to British Columbians, reporting to the Legislative Assembly through the Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth, and the appointment of the Representative is by unanimous agreement of all members of the Legislative Assembly.

Child-Centred Focus

The Representative and her staff are at all times guided by a child-centred focus. This means that the child's best interests are the paramount consideration in all actions and decisions. The guiding principles governing the work of the Office of the Representative for Children and Youth are:

- The child and youth's needs and interests, now and in the future, are the focus.
- Children and youth have a right to be protected and kept safe.
- Children are respected and valued as individuals in their own right, with their own interests and abilities.
- Children and youth have the right to participate and be heard in decisions affecting them.
- Families are the best environment for raising a child.
- Parents and extended family have the primary responsibility for a child.
- Society has a collective responsibility for providing resources and services for children, youth and their families, in particular supports for vulnerable children and youth to ensure access to equal opportunities.

- All children and youth are entitled to an equal standard of care and protection and access to consistent, timely, and responsive services and supports.
- Children and youth are empowered and given the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Operating Principles and Values

The effectiveness of the Office is dependent on how it carries out its duties and responsibilities. The values of the Office reflect its mandate and its vision to be an organization that is highly effective and valued for the role it plays in upholding the rights of vulnerable children and youth, and for promoting improvements in the delivery of services to children, youth and their families.

Staff are at all times guided by the highest standards of ethical and professional behaviour and are individually and collectively responsible for upholding the following values:

- *Respect* – We are respectful in all our dealings with others. We accept differing views and approaches and in our interaction with children and youth we are accessible and easy to approach, calm, helpful and emphatic.
- *Integrity* – We are honest and open. We conduct ourselves in a fair, unbiased and consistent manner. We demonstrate honesty and are trustworthy.
- *Competence* – We are knowledgeable and have the required expertise, skills and understanding to effectively perform our work. We demonstrate understanding of complex issues.
- *Critical Thinking* – We demonstrate an evidence-based approach to our work and critical thinking through actively seeking out facts and information, considering differing opinions, undertaking thorough analysis and remaining open to new information.
- *Collaboration* – We endeavour to build a greater understanding of the B.C. child- and youth-serving system and identify opportunities for improving the system among all stakeholders, including the general public, the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia, the Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth, MCFD and other ministries and agencies.
- *Accountability* – We are clear about what we do, how we do it and how we will measure our performance.

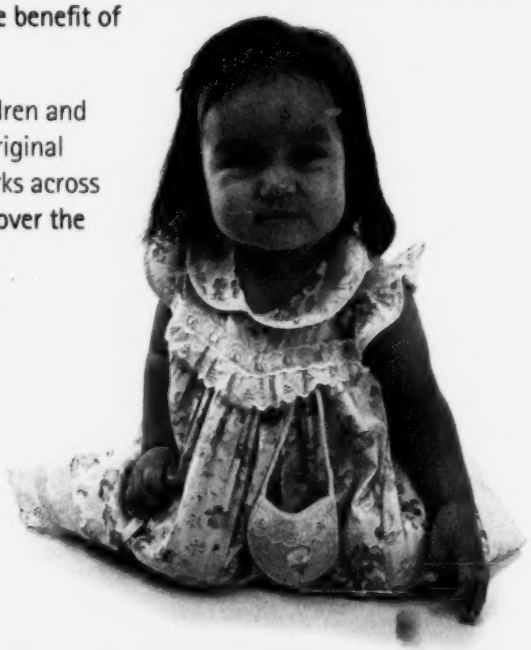
Focus on Aboriginal Peoples

Aboriginal children and youth are over-represented in B.C.'s child protection system, under-represented in many systems of support. They often face challenges resulting in extreme vulnerabilities. Supporting and assisting Aboriginal children and youth is a particular focus of the Representative's Office.

This includes engaging with, collaborating with and establishing partnerships with Aboriginal communities to deliver outreach, advocacy and support for initiatives that improve results for Aboriginal children and youth. The Office does this in a way that respects their unique sense of place, culture, language and community. The Office also partners and works with the provincial and federal government in addressing issues related to Aboriginal children and youth receiving government services.

A Memorandum of Understanding between the Representative's Office and the First Nations Leadership Council and the Métis Nation of British Columbia to explore and discuss the current state of Aboriginal children and youth who live outside the parental home or community has been in place for several years. The Office is finalizing a Memorandum of Understanding with the First Nations Directors' Forum composed of directors of delegated agencies to facilitate information-sharing and communication on services to children and youth receiving services from these organizations. The Office has also entered into an agreement with the First Nations Education Steering Committee to support information-sharing on educational attainment and outcomes for aboriginal children across B.C. Only through meaningful engagement with Aboriginal organizations across British Columbia will there be opportunities to collect and disseminate the required data and to address systemic barriers for the benefit of vulnerable Aboriginal children and youth.

Enhanced engagement with Aboriginal children and youth, Aboriginal leadership, delegated Aboriginal agencies, and Aboriginal community networks across B.C. will continue to be a goal of the Office over the coming years.



Planning Context

Current Environment

Most children and youth in British Columbian grow up in homes where they are safe and healthy and where they experience a stable environment and circumstances that support their development. Some children and youth, however, live in an environment and experience circumstances that are not optimal to their development, and that affect their safety, health and well-being. Poverty, abuse, neglect, addictions, living outside the parental home or coping with special needs can all contribute to less stability and hope for the future. Strong systems of support can, however, improve the outcomes for these children and ensure that they have equal opportunity to develop to their full potential.

Challenges and Opportunities

- **B.C. has a significant population of vulnerable children, with much higher rates** of vulnerability for Aboriginal children. In 2009/10, approximately 15,500 children lived outside the parental home, and about 55 per cent of those were in care of the government. As of September 2010, 8,322 children were in care. The situation is more profound for Aboriginal children. Just eight per cent of B.C.'s child and youth population is Aboriginal, but more than 52 per cent of children and youth in care are Aboriginal. About 1 in 16 Aboriginal children are in care compared to 1 in 100 of the total B.C. child and youth population. The number of children and youth in care declined by 15 per cent over the ten-year period between 2000/01and 2009/10. However, over this same period the number of Aboriginal children and youth in care increased.
- Children and youth who are in care or receiving services from the child- and youth-serving system are more vulnerable than the general population. They are more likely to be less healthy and less educated, to live in poverty, experience family violence and/or sexual and emotional abuse, have a higher incidence of special needs, behavioural issues or mental illness, experience a higher level of incarceration, and are more likely to be dependent on income assistance. These trends are compounded for Aboriginal children and youth. Aboriginal children and youth in care have poorer educational outcomes than non-Aboriginal children and youth in care,[1] and they are more likely to become involved with the youth justice system than non-Aboriginal youth who have been in care.[2]

[1] Health and Well-Being of Children in Care in British Columbia – Educational Experience and Outcomes, **Joint Special Report, Representative for Children and Youth, and Provincial Health Officer, May 2007.**

[2] Kids, Crime and Care: Health and Well-Being of Children in Care in British Columbia – Youth Justice Experiences and Outcomes, Joint Special Report, Representative for Children and Youth, and Provincial **Health Officer, February 2009**

- The population structure of British Columbia is changing. In the past few years, B.C. experienced a slight dip in the number of children ages 0 to 14 years. That trend has now reversed, and from 2010 onwards this population will continue to grow at a rate of about 1.3 to 1.5 per cent. The slight decline in the youth population is expected to continue over the next few years, but that trend will also reverse by the end of this decade. The growth of the Aboriginal child and youth population is increasing at a much higher rate than the overall child and youth population in B.C. Immigration is also increasing, particularly from Asian countries. Overall, the B.C. population continues to age (the 65 years and older population is projected to increase by over 4 per cent for the next several years).

  The growing Aboriginal child and youth population has significant implications for the child- and youth-serving system, particularly given their vulnerability. As well, the increasing portion of immigrant children and youth underscores the importance of building accessible and culturally appropriate services that effectively meet the needs of immigrant populations.

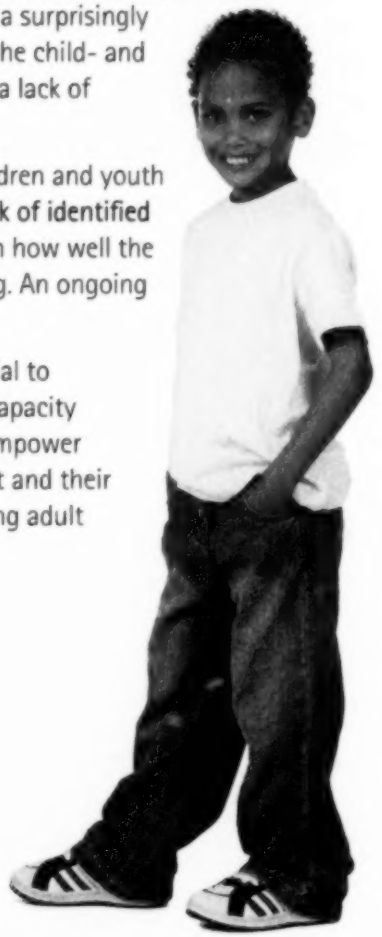
  The fundamental change in the population structure means that an increasing number of elderly will be supported by a decreasing number of young earners. Continued and growing pressure on the health care system has the potential to significantly impact the availability of funds for other public services, including services to children, youth and their families.

- Children and youth continue to be the victims of violence. Some children and youth are subject to injury or even death as a result of violence, and those exposed to it often suffer emotional and behavioural disturbances.

- There is an increasing demand for responsive and effective services for children and youth with special needs and their families. This is attributed to increased awareness of the rights and interests of special needs children and youth, the expanded scope of what is considered special needs, improved diagnoses and greater recognition and understanding of our responsibility to support all children in an inclusive fashion.

- Following the global economic downturn, B.C. is experiencing an economic recovery, but economic performance over the next few years is not expected to be as strong as in the past decade. The government projects that it will run a deficit for the next few years, returning to balanced budgets by 2013/14. The economic situation has implications for services to children, youth and their families as times of slower economic growth can sometimes mean decreased focus and resources dedicated to addressing the needs of the most vulnerable in society.

- According to Statistics Canada, B.C. has the highest child poverty rate in Canada, and it has been the highest for six years in a row despite a trend downward. Of critical concern is the impact that poverty has on the day-to-day lives of vulnerable children and families, and its impact on ensuring equal access to all children to services, programs and opportunities to succeed. Children in families coping with poverty are at a significant disadvantage. They often lack nourishing food, have poorer school performance and are challenged by impaired language development, reading and memory skills, and by high degrees of stress and isolation. Often these children live in poor housing in impoverished neighbourhoods with few social supports. Despite this, B.C. lacks an integrated, coordinated and focused plan to address and reduce poverty in the province.
- The Representative has issued progress reports on the implementation of the Hughes Review recommendations. The overall finding from these reports is one of slow progress on real change, coupled with a surprisingly limited internal oversight capacity and confusion in the child- and youth-serving sector about the overall direction and a lack of specificity about the intended transformation.
- Little is still known about outcomes achieved for children and youth in the child- and youth-serving system. There is a lack of identified outcomes and limited measurement and reporting on how well the system serving B.C.'s children and youth is performing. An ongoing challenge is how to improve this.
- Broader awareness of the rights of children is essential to establish the foundation for building resiliency and capacity in children and youth. It is essential to engage and empower youth in order to support their personal development and their growth into independent, responsible and contributing adult members of society.



Vision, Goals and Objectives, Strategies and Performance Measures

Vision

The Office of the Representative for Children and Youth is:

An organization highly valued for championing the fundamental rights of vulnerable children and youth, and for promoting improvements in the delivery of services to children, youth and their families that result in better lives for children and youth.

Goals

The Office of the Representative for Children and Youth has four main goals:

1. Advocacy supports vulnerable children in having their rights and interests protected and upheld, their voices heard and considered and being active participants in decisions affecting them.
2. The identification of opportunities for strengthening the child- and youth-serving system improves outcomes for vulnerable children and youth and the quality of services provided to them.
3. The examination of critical injuries and deaths contributes to ensuring that children and youth are safe from violence, abuse, neglect and exposure to violence.
4. The Office delivers its mandate in a child-centred, objective, open, collaborative and accountable way.

Objectives, Strategies and Performance Measures

Advocacy

Goal 1 – Advocacy supports vulnerable children in having their rights and interests protected and upheld, their voices heard and considered and being active participants in decisions affecting them.

Objective 1.1 – British Columbians are informed of and understand the rights of children and youth, and are aware of services available to support vulnerable children and youth.

Strategies

We will:

- inform and educate children and youth about the advocacy support and advice provided by our Office and how to access it, and actively promote the services available to support vulnerable children and youth
- build public awareness and understanding of the rights of children and youth through disseminating publications, and hosting presentations and workshops in communities and with community and child and youth organizations
- work with community partners to build understanding and engage communities in supporting vulnerable children, youth and their families, and advocating for them.

Objective 1.2 - Agencies providing child and youth services respect the rights of vulnerable children and youth, and promote children and youth in effectively participating in decisions about their life.

Strategies

We will:

- work with child- and youth-serving agencies to ensure that consideration of the rights of children and youth is integrated into policies and practices, and that children and youth are active participants in the decision-making process
- work with government bodies and agencies who serve vulnerable children and youth to review and improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of their dispute resolution processes in achieving timely and fair resolution of disagreements, and advocate for changes where appropriate.

Objective 1.3 – Children and youth have access to expanded and enhanced advocacy supports and services.

Strategies

We will:

- continue to deliver expanded and enhanced advocacy supports and services to children and youth in relation to designated government-funded services and programs
- expand our work with communities to provide outreach, training, education and other resources in support of the development of comprehensive community-based advocacy programs.

Objective 1.4 - Children and youth have access to advocacy services that are responsive to their unique cultures, beliefs, values and needs.

Strategies

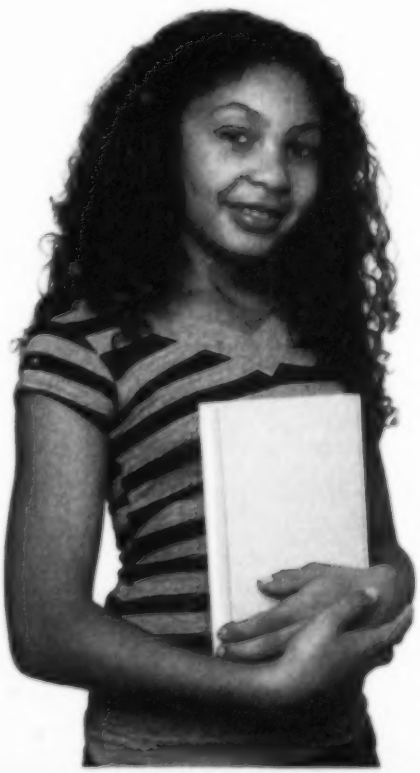
We will:

- consult with young people about their needs, interests and concerns about the child- and youth-serving system and engage them in identifying ways to ensure that services are responsive
- continue to consult with communities, including First Nations communities and Aboriginal peoples, to identify their needs for advocacy services and collaborate with them on the design and implementation of community advocacy programs that meet their needs
- review and consider services and programs currently available, consult with immigrant communities to identify their needs for advocacy services, and work to design and implement relevant and effective advocacy services for British Columbia's growing population of immigrant children and youth.

Measuring Performance				
Key Outcomes	Measures	Targets		
		2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Advocacy services are accessible and available to vulnerable children and youth throughout the province	Total # of advocacy cases per year	1,750	1,800	1,850
Advocacy and other services support children and youth having their voices heard and interests considered	% of individuals receiving advocacy services who reported that they were satisfied with the overall quality of the Advocacy program	70% respondents reported that they were satisfied	75% respondents reported that they were satisfied	75% respondents reported that they were satisfied

Data Collection Method: Case management reporting system tracking and reporting number of advocacy cases where the Office provides information, advice and/or support. Targets based on trends for increasing demand for service based on increased outreach and ensuring advocacy services available to children and youth involved in family law issues.

[Note – the baseline for the survey took place in the 2010/11 fiscal year.]



Monitoring, Research and Evaluation

Goal 2 – The identification of opportunities for strengthening the child- and youth-serving system improves outcomes for vulnerable children and youth and the quality of services provided to them.

Objective 2.1 – Identify strengths, gaps and opportunities for system improvement by ongoing monitoring of the quality of services to and the outcomes for vulnerable children and youth.

Strategies

We will:

- develop and publish, on a regular basis, reports monitoring the circumstances of vulnerable children and youth in the province
- raise public awareness of the circumstances of vulnerable children and youth
- monitor the delivery of designated services to children, youth and their families
- monitor the delivery of designated services to Aboriginal children and youth and their families.

Objective 2.2 – Examine the responsiveness and effectiveness of designated services for children and youth and make recommendations for improving service quality and outcomes for vulnerable children and youth by conducting research, reviews and audits.

Strategies

We will:

- undertake reviews and audits of identified designated services for children and youth and prepare public reports on the effectiveness, responsiveness and accountability of these services and programs
- undertake research into emerging trends and areas of interest and concern within the child- and youth-serving system
- collaborate with universities and other independent bodies to broaden and strengthen the Office's research capacity and ability to thoroughly and comprehensively examine a range of issues relating to the child- and youth-serving system
- identify, report on and make recommendations respecting system-wide issues that arise out of the work of the Office

- support the ongoing monitoring and reporting on the state of children and youth in the province, including the preparation of such reports as *Growing up in B.C.*, to provide an understanding of how well children are doing and where improvements are needed
- engage and collaborate with other Independent Officers of the Legislature and public bodies on matters of importance for children and youth
- report to the Standing Committee on Children and Youth, and publicly, on the status of recommendations made to improve the effectiveness, responsiveness and accountability of services and programs.

Measuring Performance				
Key Outcome	Measure	Targets		
		2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Identified opportunities to strengthen the effectiveness, responsiveness and accountability of designated services, inform improvements to services, ultimately improving outcomes for vulnerable children and youth	Stakeholders are aware of **identified opportunities** for improving the quality, effectiveness and responsiveness of services, and are engaged in advocating and making changes to strengthen the child- and youth-serving system	**For all identified opportunities, the** Representative informs stakeholders and takes all means available to engage them in working to improve service quality		

Data Collection Method: Monitoring and tracking of engagement efforts, including new engagement efforts and opportunities to break down barriers to engagement and implement effective engagement strategies adopted year to year; and monitoring of acceptance and adoption of recommendations made **by the Office about system improvements and the effectiveness, responsiveness and accountability of** designated services for children and youth. Over the longer term, monitoring, tracking and analysis of the well-being outcomes for vulnerable children and youth in the province.

[Stakeholders include British Columbians; the Legislature, the Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth; government ministries and agencies; children, youth and their families; Aboriginal communities; and child- and youth-serving organizations.]

Child Critical Injury and Death Review and Investigation

Goal 3 – The examination of critical injuries and deaths contributes to ensuring that children and youth are safe from violence, abuse, neglect and exposure to violence.

Objective 3.1 – Review and investigate the critical injuries and deaths of children and youth receiving reviewable services to inform improvements to services and to aid in the prevention of similar injuries or deaths in the future.

Strategies

We will:

- establish and maintain an effective and accountable child critical injury and child death review and investigation process to meet our statutory responsibility, including reporting publicly on investigations and on aggregate reviews identifying and analyzing recurring circumstances or trends
- work collaboratively with other public bodies to promote an integrated and accountable systemic approach to reviewing child deaths and injuries and to learning from reviews and investigations
- develop a network among child critical injury and death review agencies to explore opportunities for collaboration and learning
- research and identify best practices to inform our own child critical injury and death review and investigation process and to provide advice to other public bodies
- chair periodic meetings of the Children's Forum (includes the Chief Coroner, the Ombudsman, the Public Guardian and Trustee, the Provincial Health Officer, and senior leaders from the Ministry of Children and Family Development and the Representative's office) to collaborate on issues relating to critical injuries and deaths of children in British Columbia.

Measuring Performance				
Key Outcome	Measure	Targets		
		2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Identified opportunities to strengthen the effectiveness, responsiveness and accountability of designated services, inform improvements to services, ultimately improving outcomes for vulnerable children and youth	Stakeholders are **aware of identified** opportunities for improving the quality, effectiveness and responsiveness of services, and are engaged in advocating and making changes to strengthen the child- and youth-serving system	**For all identified opportunities, the Representative** informs stakeholders and takes all means available to engage them in working to improve service quality		

Data Collection Method: Monitoring and tracking of engagement efforts, including new engagement efforts and opportunities to break down barriers to engagement and implement effective engagement strategies adopted year to year; and monitoring of acceptance and adoption of recommendations made **by the Office about system improvements and the effectiveness, responsiveness and accountability of** designated services for children and youth. Over the longer term, monitoring, tracking and analysis of the well-being outcomes for vulnerable children and youth in the province.

[Stakeholders include British Columbians; the Legislature; the Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth; government ministries and agencies; children, youth and their families; Aboriginal communities; and child- and youth-serving organizations.]

Organizational Effectiveness

Goal 4 – The Office delivers its mandate in a child-centred, open, collaborative, accountable and responsive way.

Objective 4.1 – A diverse, competent and professional staff.

Strategies

We will:

- establish and maintain effective hiring policies and practices and a recruitment and succession strategy to ensure that staff are representative of the diversity of the population served by the Office
- undertake annual employee performance reviews and ensure that staff have sufficient knowledge and resources and are supported through training and professional development
- promote employee engagement and productivity through ensuring safe workplaces and supporting health and well-being initiatives.

Objective 4.2 – Effective infrastructure, operations, policies, programs and practices to fulfill the mandate of the Office.

Strategies

We will:

- maintain a strong presence throughout British Columbia to ensure access to our services
- build and maintain public awareness – in particular with children and youth, their families, government ministries and relevant public bodies – about who we are, what we do, how we do, it and how our services can be accessed
- host, participate and support conferences, forums and other events that address issues relating to vulnerable children and youth, explore key issues and emerging opportunities to serve children and youth more effectively and share information and best practices
- review the delivery of programs to ensure their effectiveness and undertake continuous improvement in order to ensure accountability to the Legislature and the people of British Columbia
- develop, implement and maintain policies, procedures, practices and protocols that reflect our child-centred approach and our values of openness, transparency, accountability, fairness and collaboration.

Measuring Performance				
Key Outcome	Measure	Targets		
		2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
The Office is effective in achieving its mandate	Internal reviews/ program evaluations of effectiveness of Advocacy; Monitoring, Evaluation and Research; and Child Critical Injury and Death Review and Investigation programs support continuous improvement in the Office's delivery of its mandate	Undertake internal program review/ evaluation of Critical Injury and Death Review and Investigations and Monitoring, Evaluation and Research programs Implement suggestions for improvement from internal review of Advocacy program	Implement suggestions for improvement from internal program reviews/evaluations of Critical Injury and Death Review and Investigations and Monitoring, Evaluation and Research programs	